

Preservice Teacher, Faculty and Online Instructional Designer Partnerships through Technology Integration into Special Education Curriculum

Abstract: The main purpose of this paper is to provide real-life examples for the assistive technology, which are used to enhance preservice teacher-faculty and online designer partnerships in special education. Therefore, a framework developed by the researchers will show the needs, expectations and strengths of preservice teachers, faculty and online designers as they interact with special education professionals regarding the academic and social progress of the children with special needs in the learning milieus. In this study, technologies in the Special Education Department of the College of Education and how they fit into developed framework will be discussed as well. The availability of technology to preservice teachers and faculties in the College of Education is crucial to make decision about what technologies provide collaborative educational settings for the preservice teachers, faculties and online designers.

Introduction

The use and integration of the new technologies, such as the Internet, World Wide Web, new computer software, etc., in educational milieus have been enormously growing for nearly two decades. Not only do these new technologies make an impact in general education, but also within preservice special education teachers who work with one of the diverse groups in the societies. However, it is observed that there are divergence approaches to use and integrate the new technologies into the Special Education Programs in Turkey. The major concern in this study is to examine and define the experiences, perspectives and expectations of the preservice special education teachers, faculty and online designers on the use and integration of the technology

A distance education professor and a professor of Special Education in Turkey have collaborated on the use and integration of technology in the College of Education for studying the dynamics of change in an era of electronic technologies. They will describe the perspectives used to examine the impact of technology on society and thus on the pedagogical tools developed to enhance eventual course delivery.

The Purpose of the Research

The main purpose of this paper is to provide real-life examples for the assistive technology, which are used to enhance preservice teacher, faculty and online designer partnerships in the Special Education. Therefore, a framework developed by the researchers will show the needs, expectations and strengths of preservice teachers, faculty and online designers as they interact with special education professionals regarding the academic and social progress of the children with special needs in the learning milieus. In this study, technologies in the College of Education and how they fit into developed framework will be discussed as well. The availability of technology to preservice teachers and faculties in the College of Education is crucial to make decision about what technologies provide collaborative educational settings for the preservice teachers and faculties. Therefore, the major concern in this study is to examine, analyze and define the experiences, perspectives and expectations of the Special Education pre-service teachers, faculty in the College of Education and online designers from Open Education Faculty toward the use and integration of the new technologies into their curriculum.

To gather the data to define and analyze the needs, expectations and strengths of preservice teachers, faculty and online designers toward developing and integrating e-learning milieus in the special education curriculum and determine the techniques to change their negative attitudes toward positive ones, the researchers will focus on these sub-purposes given below in this study:

1. To individualize communication technologies for methods for collaboration as partnerships developed between home and school,
2. To understand the needs and strengths of parents to make communication possible with preservice teachers, faculty and online designers,
3. To provide a framework used for decision making process to individualize the methods of collaboration used, and
4. To enhance preservice teachers, faculty and online designers partnership via communication technologies by making a good decision on which technologies will be used for collaboration.

Research Method

This is an ongoing action research. The researchers have been working with the preservice teachers and the faculty in the College of Education and the online designers for two years. The College of Education of the one the biggest Middle Anatolian University attempts to develop motivated and committed preservice teachers and faculties in the Special Education Program. In keeping with its continuous progress goals, the preservice teachers and faculties in the Special Education Program at the College of Education and online designers instigate an effort to use and integrate the role of technology. As preservice teachers and faculty in the Special Education Program, by expanding our focus, we, together, have to rethink and redesign our Special Education Program to support National standards, and to enhance assistive technology for the people with special needs.

This study utilizes both qualitative and quantitative data to provide detailed information to the researchers for analysis. The combination of this method helps the researcher to generate new perspectives and stimulate new directions in data analysis. The combination of the methodologies is to strengthen this study design and to provide data triangulation (the use of a variety of data sources), theory triangulation (the use of multiple perspectives to interpret the data collected), and methodological triangulation (the use of multiple methods to study the focus of this research). Therefore, the researchers overcome the intrinsic bias that can come from single methods.

To provide the credibility issue in this study, the researchers adopt a stance of neutrality with regard to the phenomenon, the experiences, perspectives and expectations of the preservice teachers, faculty and online designers on the use and integration of the technology. In other words, they will not try to prove a specific perspective and manipulate the data from the different sources. This study is exploratory in order to allow insights to emerge from a recursive data analysis process.

Participants

Through purposive sampling techniques, the 50 voluntary preservice teachers from senior classes and 10 faculties in the Special Education Department and two online designers from Open Education Faculty at a large Middle Anatolia State University are selected as participants.

From the purposeful sampling, toward the end of the third week of the Fall Semester-2003, twelve preservice teachers, six female and six male participants in the senior classes, and six faculties, three female and six male, in the College of Education of this University, and two online designers from Open Education Faculty will be chosen for the interviews. These twelve preservice teachers and six faculties will be identified for the interviews according to their pre-survey scores. Four preservice teachers and two faculties will obtain very low scores about their needs, expectations and strengths toward the use and integration of the technology whereas four teachers two faculties will have moderate scores toward the use and integrate technology and the last four and two will have very high pre-survey scores about their needs, expectations and strengths toward the use and integration of the technology. Two online designers from Open Education Faculty, earned their BA degree from the College of Education, having Ed.D degrees, are voluntarily participants in this study.

Research Instruments & Data Collections

First of all, the 50 preservice teachers, 10 faculties and two online designers are asked individually to read and sign the informed consents form, which describes the research in detail. The researchers also strongly emphasize that they are interested in studying the needs, expectations and strengths of the preservice teachers, faculties and online designers toward the use and integration of the technology in their Program. These total 62 participants in this study are asked to fill out three questionnaires: 1) a pre-survey given at the third of the Fall Semester-2003, 2) at the revised Flashlight questionnaire given the eight week of the Fall Semester-2003, and 3) a post-survey given at the fourteenth week of the Fall Semester-2003.

The main instrument of data collection in this research will be the interview protocols. The researchers in this study will interview with twelve participants from the senior class, six faculties in Special Education Department of College of Education and two online designers at the fourth week of the Fall Semester-2003 and at the tenth week of the Fall Semester-2003. All interviews will be taped-recorded. Also, the researchers will take paper-pencil notes consisting primarily of major points during both focusing group sessions. It is estimated that each focusing group session will last approximately 60 minutes.

Based on the data collected from different sources in this study, the researcher will finally develop a framework to use and integrate assistive technology into Special Education Program of the University. Consequently, a particular theoretical

arrangement that is deliberately selected provides the indispensable basis for corresponding instructional methods in the Special Education Program based on technology-based education. Each dimension of this framework also has a number of sub-dimensions that consist of items or issues focusing on an explicit feature of technology-based special education applications. These items or issues of the framework are systemically interrelated and interdependent. These characteristics of the framework can also help instructional designers design, implement and evaluate meaningful virtual learning milieus. To design, implement and evaluate Special education Program based on the framework of any distance education program of a developed, developing and under-developed country must be focused on how this framework provides not only open but also flexible virtual learning environments for global learners worldwide. For this reason, the preservice teachers, faculty and online designers must collaborate with learners, instructors, trainers, administrators, and technical support staff as well as other services from all over the world.

Conclusion

There have been drastic changes in the strategies and organization using the communication technologies as educational tools in special education environments over the last decade. The new advancements and approaches of the use of these technologies for special education purposes force the preservice teachers and faculty from the Special Education Department and the online designers to develop new technology applications and integrate them into special education. Thus, ETV provides richer interactions and more collaboration among the preservice teachers, faculty and online designers, and interactive and accessible information resources via technology. In this case, to develop a convenient framework for their curriculum, the needs, expectations and strengths of preservice teachers, faculty and online designers to integrate and use new technologies into special education learning settings are becoming crucial to define and analyze.

The crucial question to ask is how Special Education in developed, developing and under-developing countries responds to the rapid changes in communication technologies and the increasing demands of diverse learners in the College of Education. There is no universal applicable guide for technology-based special education applications that shows how to cope with change and the conflict. However, strategies of planned, necessary changes in educational systems need to be developed within the framework developed by the researchers that includes an awareness of the major forces of social, institutional and technological as well as educational changes confronting educational systems.

References

- Burniske, R.W. & Monke, L. (2001). *Breaking Down the Digital Walls: Learning to Teach in a Post-Modem World*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Harper, C. (1998). *And That's the Way It Will Be: News and Information in a Digital World*. New York, NY: New York University Press.
- Lessing, L. (2001). *The Future of Ideas: The Role of the Commons in a Connected World*. New York, NY: Random House Inc.
- Lessing, L. (Ed) (2000). The 2000/2001 ASTD Distance Learning Yearbook. Washington, D.C.: McGraw-Hill , Inc.
- Khan, B. H. (1997). *Web-Based Instruction*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Educational Technology Publications.
- Koschmann, J. & et al. (1994). Using technology to assist in realizing effective learning and instruction: A principled approach to the use of computers in collaborative learning. *Journal of the Learning Science* 3(3), 227-264.
- Lumpkings, B., Pippen, F. & Parker, F. (1997). *Collaborative distance learning (CDL): An instructional model designed to enrich teacher education courses*. (http://www.coe.uh.edu/~coe911/HTML1997/de_lump.htm).
- Martindale, J. & Ahern, S. Z. (1998). Utilizing Technology in educational research: Implementation with graduate students. Paper presented at the *AAECT Conference*, Huston, TX.
- Marquardt, M.J. & Kearsley, G. (1999). *Technology-Based Learning: Maximizing Human Performance and Cooperate Success*. Washington, D.C.: St Lucie Press.
- Mason, R. (1994). *Using Communications Media in Open and Flexible Learning*. London, UK: Kogan Page Limited.
- Mory E. H., Gambill, L. E. & Browing, J. B. (1998). Instruction on the web: The online student's perspective. Paper presented at the *AAEC Conference*. ([http://www.coe.uh.edu/insite/elec pub/HTML1998](http://www.coe.uh.edu/insite/elec_pub/HTML1998)).
- Muffoletto, R. (Ed) (2001). *Education & Technology: Critical Perspective Practices*. Cresskill, NY: Hampton Press, Inc.
- Palloff, R. M. & Pratt, K. (1999). *Building Learning Communities in Cyber space: Effective Strategies for the Online Classroom*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey -Bass Publishers.
- Picciano, A. G. (2001). *Distance Learning: Making Connections Across Virtual Space and Time*. Columbus, OH: Merrill Prentice Hill.
- Tait, A. & Mills, R. (Eds.) (1999). *The Convergence of Distance and Conventional Education: Patterns of Flexibility for the Individual Learner*. New York, NY: Routledge Publishing.
- Torres, C. A. (1998). *Democracy, Education and Multiculturalism: Dilemmas of Citizenship in a Global World*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.